



# NEWSLETTER

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**  
**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF THE MILITARY**



## MESSAGE FROM SDDVA SECRETARY WHITLOCK

September is National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month—a time to raise awareness and connect individuals to treatment services.

Mental health conditions can affect anyone regardless of age, gender, or background. The truth is, we can all benefit from honest conversations about mental health conditions. Just like physical health, mental health is important at every stage of life and is essential to your overall well-being.

Although veterans can often recognize when to treat their physical injuries, it can be harder for them to identify mental health or readjustment challenges. Some veterans, or their loved ones, may notice symptoms and experiences affecting their lives but aren't sure what to do about them. Others may think nothing can be done or may have concerns about the impact of treatment.

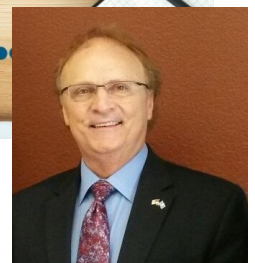
For almost every mental health condition, there are several effective treatments that can help veterans cope with symptoms and greatly improve quality of life. Treatment can help veterans understand their condition and change how they think about it, in part by identifying steps to improve their response to emotional triggers, stressful situations, and other challenges in their life.

It's never too late for soldiers to get treatment or support for the challenges they face, whether they just returned from a deployment, were stateside during their whole time in service, or have been home for 40 years. Even veterans who didn't realize they were dealing with a mental health condition for many years can improve their lives with treatment. Recovering from a mental health challenge is a process that involves hope, action, problem-solving, and tapping in-to or building up a support system — in addition to close guidance from a trained professional.

Veterans, to find resources nearest you, visit: <https://www.maketheconnection.net/resources>.

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# BRIDGE DEDICATION FOR SGT ALLEN D. KOKESH, JR.

The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs will be hosting a State Bridge Dedication Ceremony to honor Combat Veteran SGT Allen D. Kokesh, Jr.

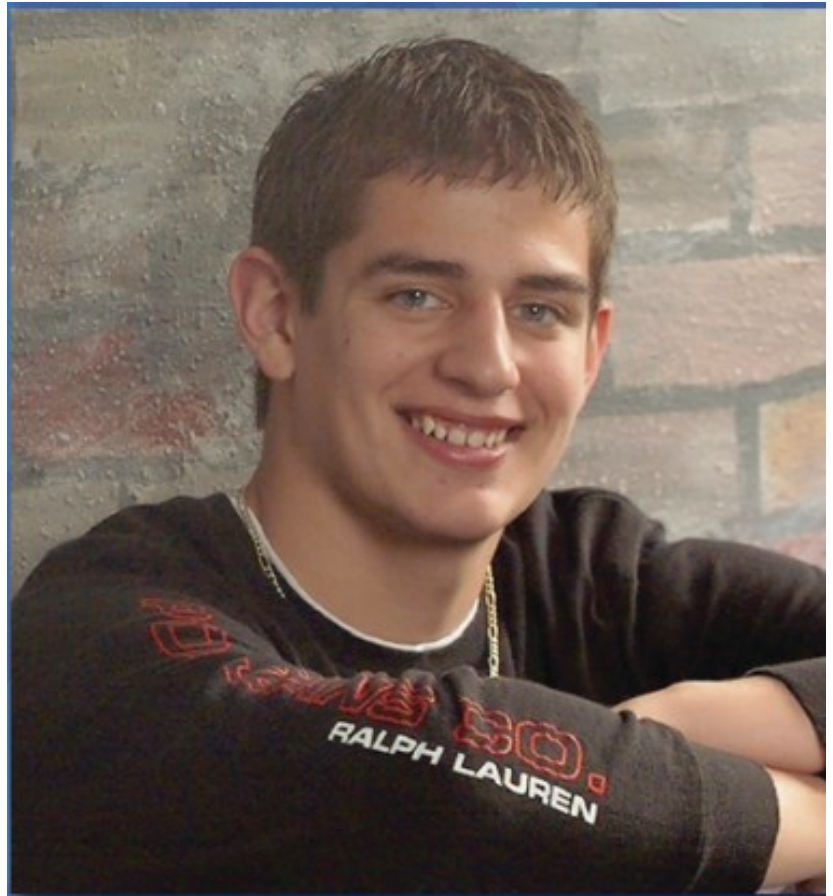
The ceremony will be held Saturday, October 3, 2020, at 1:00 pm (CT) in front of the Yankton County Court House at 321 W. Third Street.

The east bound James River Bridge on HWY 50 will be dedicated to SGT Allen D. Kokesh, Jr., of Yankton, who died on February 7, 2006, from wounds sustained in combat on December 4, 2005, following a detonation of a roadside bomb in Baghdad. Kokesh was serving with Battery C, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 147<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery unit based out of Yankton.

Naming bridges in honor of our combat veterans who died while serving their country is a new initiative of Governor Kristi Noem and the South Dakota Departments of Military, Transportation, and Veterans Affairs.

"Whenever and wherever this nation has called, in times of darkness and danger, as well as in times of peace and prosperity, veterans have been there and have proudly carried the torch of liberty for all to see," said Greg Whitlock, secretary of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs.

"Our fallen heroes are no longer with us, but their memories live on in the hearts of their loved ones and our state," said Whitlock. "Naming our South Dakota bridges in honor of our fallen will give us an opportunity of remembrance, reflection, and respect—for honoring the men and women who gave their lives in service to this nation. They cherished liberty and loved freedom enough to lay down their lives to preserve our way of life."



# VHA AWARDS HRTG TO POST 20 AMERICAN LEGION

Thanks to the federal Highly Rural Transportation Grant (HRTG) from the Veterans Health Administration, American Legion Post 20 of Fort Pierre, will be able to continue to provide free transportation for veterans and caregivers to and from medical appointments. The grant funds can only be used for veterans in counties considered highly rural (seven people or fewer residing per square mile).

Currently there are 34 highly rural counties across South Dakota that qualify under this grant. Post 20 has entered into partnerships with River Cities Public Transit of Pierre and Prairie Hills Transit of Spearfish to provide the services afforded under this grant.

"This has been a tremendous program for South Dakota Veterans," said River Cities Public Transit Executive Director Ron Baumgart. "We are honored to be in partnership with Stanley Post 20 to offer veterans living in qualifying counties access to their medical appointments. This grant will make a tremendous impact on providing better healthcare outcomes for veterans."



"It is humbling for our company to be able to provide this amazing opportunity for veterans in highly rural counties," said Prairie Hills Transit Executive Director Barb Cline. "Post 20 has enabled us to make a difference in the lives of veterans every single day. This grant couldn't have come at a better time."

Nationally, veterans from rural and highly rural areas account for almost 30.5% of the enrolled veterans who served in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), and Operation New Dawn (OND). The main obstacles cited by highly rural veterans in obtaining VA health care are distance and transportation. This grant helps eliminate these obstacles for rural veterans across South Dakota.

Prairie Hills Transit is a 501 c-3 nonprofit organization promoting and supporting the delivery of safe and efficient public and specialized transportation. Prairie Hills Transit is headquartered in Spearfish. You can learn more about Prairie Hills Transit by visiting: [www.prairiehillstransit.com](http://www.prairiehillstransit.com).

River Cities Public Transit is a 501 c-3 nonprofit organization specializing in rural transit and paratransit services. River Cities Public Transit is headquartered in Pierre. Visit: [www.rcpctransit.com](http://www.rcpctransit.com) to learn more.



# **“We’ve Got Your Six”**

## **1st Annual Northern Hills Veterans Appreciation Fair**

**Open to ALL veterans  
and their families!**



**Friday, November 6, 2020**

**2:00 PM—4:00 PM**

**Drive-through at the Sturgis Parking Lot between  
Lynn's Dakotamart and the Post Office - 1111 Lazelle St.**

**Open to ALL Veterans and their families**

Veteran Service Officers from Meade and Lawrence Counties, resources from the Department of Labor, housing, education, counseling, transportation, loans, healthcare, Veteran Readiness and Employment, food, and more...

**Please assist a Veteran to attend.**

Event chairs: Julie Malcolm & Connie Turner, Spearfish American Legion Auxiliary Unit 164

# **SD VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM EXPANDING SERVICES**

The South Dakota Department of Human Services (DHS) Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program is expanding services to assist individuals with disabilities return to work as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The pandemic has created significant employment challenges for many South Dakotans, especially those with disabilities. VR is here to help employers and individuals with disabilities face those challenges head-on,” said DHS Secretary Shawnie Rechtenbaugh.

The VR Program can provide the following services to employers and individuals with disabilities:

- Vocational Counseling and Guidance
- Job Accommodations
- Employment Preparation and Supports
- Employment Training

The VR program will reimburse employers for wages during a training period when they hire individuals with disabilities. Wage reimbursement can be for new employees or previous employees returning to their job.

Any person whose disability significantly interferes with getting or keeping a job, and who needs VR services to overcome these barriers to employment could be eligible for VR Services.

Individuals with disabilities or employers wanting more information or assistance, please email [infors@state.sd.us](mailto:infors@state.sd.us) or call 1-800-265-9679.



# 211TH ENGINEER COMPANY CHANGES LEADERSHIP

Capt. Trevor Reisch took command of the South Dakota Army National Guard's 211th Engineer Company during a Sept. 13 ceremony at the Madison National Guard Armory.

Reisch assumed responsibility of the unit from Capt. John Lundeen who served in the position since October 2018.

As commander, Reisch is now responsible for overseeing the command and control, administrative, logistics and training support for the unit's 130 assigned soldiers.

"This is one of the highest honors in my life to take command of the best company in the state," said Reisch. "They always accomplish their assigned missions with the highest standards."

The 211th is a mobility augmentation company that conducts assault gap crossings, conducts mounted and dismounted breaches, and emplaces obstacles in support of maneuver units to enable force application, focused logistics, and protection.

"The 211th has a distinguished legacy full of combat deployments and has some of the best officers, NCOs and soldiers in the South Dakota National Guard," said Reisch. "I look forward to working with the soldiers of the 211th in the next couple of years."

Reisch has been a member of the SDARNG for 16 years and also serves as the fulltime training officer for the 196th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade's rear detachment in Sioux Falls.

Lundeen, the departing commander, will be assigned as the logistics officer for the 109th Engineer Battalion in Rapid City.







# VETERANS STAND DOWN

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**October 2, 2020  
11:00 AM- 2:00 PM.  
VOA Veterans Service Center  
1113 East 14<sup>th</sup> St.  
Sioux Falls, SD 57104**

**Please join us for our annual Veterans Stand Down. This year's stand down will be conducted as a walk through. Veterans will walk through designated lanes to receive a bag of items (winter items, personal care and hygiene items, and community resources).**

**In order to prevent the community spread of COVID-19, social distancing will be strictly enforced. Please wear a mask when attending this event. If you do not have a mask, one will be provided to you.**

# 881ST TROOP COMMAND CHANGES LEADERSHIP

Lt. Col. Jon Murphy took command of the South Dakota Army National Guard's 881st Troop Command during a Sept. 14 ceremony at the Sturgis National Guard Armory.

Murphy, of Piedmont, assumed responsibility of the unit from Lt. Col. Dana Limbo, of Sturgis, who served in the position since September 2018.

As commander, Murphy is now responsible for overseeing the command and control, administrative, logistics and training support for the battalion's nearly 390 Soldiers in 10 assigned units and detachments in four communities.

"I am honored and blessed to take command of the most relevant battalion within the South Dakota Army National Guard," said Murphy. "I am excited to have the opportunity to lead the diverse and skilled units within the 881st Troop Command."

Murphy serves as the fulltime state army aviation officer for the SDARNG's Army Aviation Support Facility in Rapid City and has over 28 years of military service. Limbo is now assigned to Joint Force Headquarters in the G3 operations branch in Rapid City.

Murphy began his career in May 1992 when he enlisted as a signal switch operator in the Nebraska National Guard. He transferred to the SDARNG's 109th Engineer Battalion in Sturgis in November 1993, where he achieved the rank of sergeant.

In May 2001, Murphy received a commission as a second lieutenant through the ROTC program at the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology and assigned as a Medical Service Corps officer. He later completed flight training as a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter pilot and served as section leader and operations officer in the 1085th Medical Company (Air Ambulance) in Rapid City.

Over the course of his career, Murphy has held a variety of aviation medevac, maintenance, operations and executive officer positions, which included assignments in Company C, 1-189th Aviation Regiment, 881st Troop Command and Joint Force Headquarters.

Murphy served as commander of Company C, 1-189th and led the unit during their deployment to Iraq in support of Operation New Dawn from May 2011 until May 2012. He also deployed with the 1085th Medical Co. in 2003 to support the NATO-led international peacekeeping force in Kosovo (KFOR).





# MIDWEST HONOR FLIGHT MASKS

Get your official Midwest Honor Flight mask pre-ordered today! Masks are handmade in the USA and will begin shipping at the beginning of October.

Each mask purchase provides a meal for one veteran on flight. Pre-orders receive free shipping as well!

Check out our online store for more details and to place your order.

<https://www.midwesthonorflight.store/product/face-mask/68?cp=true&sa=true&sbp=false&q=false>



# VA ACHIEVES HISTORIC MILESTONE IN ISSUING APPEALS DECISIONS

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced the Board of Veterans' Appeals (Board) reached a historic milestone, issuing more than 100,000 decisions this fiscal year (FY) 2020.

The Board also completed over 15,000 hearings with 4,000 conducted as virtual tele-hearings.

FY 2019 previously marked the highest point for decisions at just above 95,000 decisions issued.

"The Board continues to demonstrate its effort to improve and modernize VA's appeals process," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "VA reaching this milestone ensures Veterans will receive the benefits and services they have earned."

The Board's modernization efforts afford Veterans the option to select a virtual tele-hearing. This hearing platform allows Veterans the convenience of having their hearings wherever they are located rather than having to travel to a VA facility.



**THIRD ANNUAL**

# Hangar Dance



**MIDWEST  
HONOR FLIGHT**

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2020**



**DOORS OPEN AT 7P / DANCE LESSONS 7:30P / LIVE MUSIC & DANCING 8P**  
**\$30 IN ADVANCE / \$40 AT THE DOOR**

Purchase online at [www.midwesthonorflight.org/dance](http://www.midwesthonorflight.org/dance)

<b>1940s Attire Encouraged</b> <b>BEST-DRESSED COUPLE</b> <b>PRIZE TO BE AWARDED</b>	<b>Tickets include swing dance lessons,</b> <b>90 minutes of live music, and a</b> <b>Midwest Honor Flight wine glass</b>	<b>Cash Bar, Food, and</b> <b>Midwest Honor Flight</b> <b>merchandise on site</b>
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**South Dakota Military Heritage Alliance / 1600 W Russell St / Sioux Falls, SD 57104**  
ALL EVENT AND SILENT AUCTION PROCEEDS WILL BENEFIT THE MIDWEST HONOR FLIGHT

SPONSORED BY

*the* **ALLIANCE**  
South Dakota Military Heritage Alliance, Inc.



*CorTrust Mortgage*



**SHERATON**  
Sioux Falls &  
Convention Center



# Flu Shot Information

VA

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
Veterans Health Administration  
Office of Community Care

## INFORMATION FOR VETERANS

Please bring this flyer when you visit an in-network retail pharmacy or urgent care location for a flu shot

**Get your no-cost flu shot today!**

### Eligibility:

- **Retail pharmacies:** You must be enrolled in VA's health care system
- **Urgent care locations:** You must be enrolled in VA's health care system care AND have received care from a VA or community provider in the past 24 months
- **VA referral not required**
- **Present a valid government-issued ID (i.e. Veterans Health ID Card, DoD ID Card or other valid government ID)**
- **Eligible Veterans can receive a standard-dose (quadrivalent) or high-dose flu shot**
- **No Copayment Required**

### Fighting The Flu Together!



**#FightFlu**

For more information, or to find an in-network location to receive your flu shot, visit: <https://www.va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/flu-shot.asp>

## INFORMATION FOR PROVIDERS

**Billing information for OPTUM providers in these states or U.S. territories:** Enter Community Care Network/Veteran's pharmacy claims using the following information:

AL, AR, CT, DC, DE, FL, GA, IA, IL, IN, KS, KY, LA, MA, MD, ME, MI, MN, MO, MS, NC, ND, NE, NH, NJ, NY, OH, OK, PA, PR, RI, SC, SD, TN, VA, VI, VT, WI, WV

**Step 1: Enter BIN: 004336**

**Step 2: Enter PCN: ADV**

**Step 3: Enter Rx Group: RX3841**

**Step 4: Enter Veteran ID: 10-digit Veteran ID**

**Step 5: Enter Veteran's date of birth (YYMMDD format)**

- If the Veteran does not have their 10-digit Veteran ID, ask the Veteran for their 9-digit SSN and call 888-901-6609 for assistance
- For questions, please call the CVS Caremark™ Pharmacy Help Desk at 800-364-6331 (24/7)

### For Urgent Care Providers

- Call 888-901-6609 to confirm Veteran's eligibility for urgent care services

**Billing information for TriWest providers in these states:** Enter Community Care Network/Veteran's pharmacy claims using the following information:

AZ, CA, CO, HI, ID, MT, NM, NV, OR, TX, UT, WA, WY

**Step 1: Enter BIN: 003858**

**Step 2: Person Code: 01**

**Step 3: Enter PCN: A4**

**Step 4: Enter Rx Group: VETERAN**

**Step 5: Enter 9-digit member ID: Patient SSN**

**Step 6: Enter Veteran's date of birth (YYMMDD format)**

- For questions, please call the Express Scripts Pharmacy Help Desk at 800-922-1557 (24/7)

### For Urgent Care Providers

- Call 833-4VETNOW (833-483-8669) to confirm Veteran's eligibility for urgent care services

### DO NOT CHARGE VETERAN A COPAYMENT FOR THE FLU SHOT

**Urgent Care:** After the visit, submit medical documentation to the Veteran's home VA medical center (VAMC) within 30 calendar days of the date of service. Find a VAMC at <https://www.va.gov/find-locations/>. **Retail Pharmacies:** provide a copy of the flu shot documentation to the Veteran and recommend they provide it to their VA primary care provider's office.

For more information, visit: [https://www.va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/revenue\\_ops/FluShot-Billing.asp](https://www.va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/revenue_ops/FluShot-Billing.asp)

# UPCOMING EVENTS

Oct 2—Veterans Stand Down—VOA Veterans Service Center (1113 E. 14th Street)—Sioux Falls—11:00 am—2:00 pm (CT)  
Oct 3—SGT Allen Kokesh Jr. Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—Yankton County Court House—1:00 pm (CT)  
Oct 3—Midwest Honor Flight Hangar Dance—SD Military Heritage Alliance (1600 W. Russell Street)—Sioux Falls—  
7:00 pm (CT)  
Oct 14—SGT Daniel Busse Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—Highmore High School Auditorium—1:30 pm (CT)  
Oct 21—SD Veterans Council Meeting—Sioux Falls  
Nov 11—SSG Jason W. Montefering and SGT Jeremiah Boehmer Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—Parkston High School  
Auditorium—9:00 am (CT)  
Nov 13—VABHHCS VSO Congressional Forum—Domiciliary Auditorium—Hot Springs VAMC—10:00 am (MT)  
Dec 1—Governor's State of the Budget Address—1:00 pm (CT)  
Jan 12—Governor's State of the State Address—1:00 pm (CT)  
Jan 13—SDDVA/SD Veterans Council Legislative Reception

Audry Ricketts, Public Information Officer

South Dakota Department of the Military <https://military.sd.gov/default.html>

South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs <https://vetaffairs.sd.gov>

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